



Caregiver Support Line – Relaxation Activity Transcript

Theme: Body Scan

Many people are deterred from trying to meditate because they do not feel they can stop themselves from thinking or maybe as Caregivers, you might just see taking the time to meditate as just one more thing to squeeze into your already busy schedule. I encourage you to keep an open mind.

You will be pleasantly surprised to find out that a person can gain benefits from meditating for as little as 5 minutes per day. You will also be happy to know that meditation has nothing to do with making yourself stop thinking. In fact, meditation is not about trying to force you to do anything. Meditation teaches us how to be present in the moment, no matter what is happening. You will find in being present, unpleasant feelings will subside more quickly and the tendency to force or control circumstances outside of your control will dissipate.

Your only goal during this meditation is to be present with yourself. Today's meditation will focus on following your breath and the sensations in your body. As thoughts and feelings enter your mind, acknowledge them and let them pass. Try not to judge them. Simply return your focus to your own breath. This will assist you in moving away from your thoughts without exerting the energy to do so. Overtime, learning to observe your thoughts and feelings can help you to have greater perspective.

Now, to begin, find a position that is comfortable. Try sitting cross legged on the floor or in a chair with your back and shoulders straight and your feet on the floor. You may prefer to lie on the floor and place a pillow or rolled towel under your knees to support your back.

Settle into the position. Notice the parts of the body that are being supported. Take a few deep breaths and close your eyes.

Take a long deep breath into your belly. Feel it expand as you breathe in and drop back as you exhale. Do not try to force yourself to breathe faster or slower. Breathe in the way that is natural to you.

Take a moment to scan your body from head to toe and acknowledge any tightness or soreness. It is natural that the stress and strain you experience will have affected you physically as well. As you move through your body, you will notice where you hold this



tightness most. Breathe into it and exhale out, releasing the tightness and strain your body is holding onto.

Next let's move more slowly and focus attention on each part of your body. Let's begin with the top of your head and your forehead. How does it feel? Are you aware of tension or tightness? Breathe into the tension and exhale. Let go of your worried thoughts and concerns about tasks that are not yet done.

Move your focus to your eyes. Observe how they feel in their resting state. Notice if the lids feel heavy or are resting softly.

Then move to your ears. Notice your environment, whether there are sounds or if there is silence.

Next, move down to your nose and notice its connection with the breath; the feel of the air coming in and out.

Observe your jaw. If there is tension, allow your lips to part slightly. Let go of any stress and resentment you may be holding onto. Feel your jaw relax as you focus your attention on your breath.

Notice your neck and your throat. If there is tightness, breathe in and allow your neck and throat to relax.

Observe your shoulders and whether they too are carrying tension. This is your time to let go and focus on you. Focus on your breath and let the tension melt away. Allow your breath to let your shoulders drop. There is no burden to carry; only time for rest.

Notice your upper arms, the fronts and then the backs. Now notice your elbows and then move to your lower arms. Again, noticing the fronts and then the backs. Notice any sensations you feel. Notice if you are tight or tense. Breathe in and let the tension go.

Notice your wrists and your hands. Notice the palm of your hands and their connection to each finger, the space between them and up into the finger tips. Often when we are angry or resentful, we may clench our fists. If these emotions are present, let them flow out of you with the breath and be replaced with new, clean air.

Now return your focus to your shoulders and move onto your upper back. Notice it expand and contract as the breath moves in and out of the lungs. Move your attention to your lower back. Become aware of any pain or tightness.



Become aware of your chest and stomach as they rise and fall from the breath. Your stomach may be holding tension as it often does when people are anxious or upset. Sometimes you will have many thoughts or feelings all at once. They may feel overwhelming. Notice them. Acknowledge them for a moment and again, let them go and return your attention to your breath.

Continuing through the body, notice your hips. Notice the weight of your body sinking into its' base. Notice the connection into your thighs. Become aware of both the front and the back of your thighs. If you find feelings of judgment arising, acknowledge them and let them go.

Breathe in and move your attention downwards to your knees and then your lower legs, the shins and the calves. Breathe out and feel your legs connecting to the ankles and then the feet.

Notice the top of your feet. Notice the bottoms, the heel, the soles and the arches. Observe your toes and the space in between each of them. If you notice that you are carrying tiredness and fatigue in your feet, breathe through this, allow the outward breath to release these emotions and the inward breath to deliver new energy.

You will now scan your entire body yet again. Notice how it feels, whether it has changed since you began the meditation. Notice your skin, whether it is warm, cold, wet or dry. Notice how it connects your entire body.

Take a few more deep breaths, in and out, out and in. If there were any emotions or thoughts that came up multiple times, acknowledge them once more and let them go as you breathe out. Breathe in fresh, new air and with it allow a sense of calm to wash over you.

When you are ready, begin to wiggle your fingers and toes. Feel the circulation returning as your body awakens again. Gently open your eyes, becoming used to the light. When you are ready to get up, do so slowly.

You may not notice any major changes in yourself following just one meditation, however, you may find that you are feeling calm and at peace. With ongoing practice, meditation has many benefits including the ability to maintain peacefulness throughout the day when challenges arise. Many people find that their ability to concentrate in general increases through engaging in these practices. It also can help you to tune into



your own needs and maintain space from others. This can mean that interactions with your loved ones may go more smoothly.

Today, we practiced a body scan meditation. Just remember, setting aside time to focus on yourself and your individual needs, no matter how you choose to do so, is of utmost importance.

Resources:

The Courage to be present: Ancient wisdom from Buddhism for today's therapists and clients by Karen Kissel Wegela, Ph.D. <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-courage-be-present/201001/how-practice-mind...>

Guided Mindfulness Meditation <http://www.do-meditation.com/guided-mindfulness-meditation.html>

Body Scan Grounding Exercise: Balancing your physical and spiritual aspects by Phylameana lila Desy <http://healing.about.com/cs/grounding/a/bodyground.htm>



A Crash Course in Body Scan Meditation by Vikki Valentine

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7650123>

Step-By-Step Body Scan Meditation <http://www.meditation-techniques-for-happiness.com/body-scan-meditation.html>

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR):Standards of Practice. Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society University of Massachusetts Medical School.